United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/835
26 February 1991

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council continues consultations on situation in Persian Gulf.

- Speakers at United Nations Seminar on Confidence- and Security-building Measures focus on application of such measures in developing countries, and in the Middle East when Gulf war ends.

- International Committee of Red Cross says it has still not received information about prisoners of war captured by Iraqi forces since 2 August 1990, and in military operations since 17 January.

- "Operation Salam" budgets $232.4 million for 1991 humanitarian and economic assistance programmes for Afghanistan.

* * *

The Security Council held consultations early this afternoon on the current situation in the Persian Gulf. After the consultations, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir David Hannay, told correspondents that the majority of the 15 Council members agreed that Iraq must comply with all 12 Council resolutions if the Council was to move forward. He said the Council President, Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe), would be in contact with all members of the Council, bilaterally, and with the two parties, Kuwait and Iraq. The British Ambassador stressed that the Council President would no doubt pass on to the Iraqi delegation that many of the Council's delegations felt that there had to be a clear, formal and written acceptance of all the Council resolutions if the Council was to move foreward.

Late last night, in a private meeting on the same issue, the Council heard a statement by the Iraqi Ambassador, Abdul Al-Anbari, who said his Government had issued orders to Iraqi troops in Kuwait to withdraw. He said Iraq was interested in completing its withdrawal as quickly as possible.

Ambassador Al-Anbari further informed the Council that the Foreign Minister of Iraq had transmitted a message to the Soviet Foreign Minister, from President Saddam Hussein to President Mikhail Gorbachev, in which the

(more)

For information media—not an official record

Iraqi leader asked the Soviet President to make efforts to achieve a cease-fire resolution so that Iraqi troops could withdraw as quickly and safely as possible. The Iraqi Ambassador called on the Council to adopt such a resolution.

Also addressing the Council, the Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, said the withdrawal had begun and that it was time for the Security Council to adopt a cease-fire resolution as quickly as possible.

The Permanent Representative of the United States, Thomas R. Pickering, told the Council the United States had seen no evidence of an Iraqi withdrawal on the ground. Allied troops were facing continuing attacks by Iraqi missiles, which had killed at least 22 Americans. He asked that Iraq make it clear that it was prepared to accept the resolutions of the Council and the coalition's proposal for withdrawal.

For the United Kingdom, Ambassador Hannay said it was not clear from the Iraqi statement whether Iraq was now willing to declare its annexation of Kuwait null and void, one of the conditions set in the Council's resolutions. The 12 resolutions were a "single corpus of international law", he said, and could not be taken to pieces.

* * *

Poverty, illiteracy and disease in Africa have created conditions that might call for a different approach to confidence-building measures from those adopted in Europe, which was once divided into two ideological blocs. That view was expressed by speakers today at a United Nations Seminar on Confidence- and Security-building Measures, which opened in Vienna yesterday.

In a discussion, speakers questioned how the European experience in such measures could be applied globally, when changes in Europe had made them outdated.

Also discussed was the possibility of applying to other regions the European experience in conflict elimination, in view of arms transfers to developing countries. The question of what measures could be taken to avoid a repetition of the situation in the Gulf, was also addressed.

Among those addressing the Seminar, Abdu O. Kinana, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the United Republic of Tanzania, said confidence-building measures which applied in Europe might be difficult to implement in Africa. Problems in Africa could be best solved within a regional framework, he said. For instance, member countries of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) had come together to liberate their economies from dependence on South Africa.

Speaking for China, Chen Wenqing, Research Fellow at the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies, said the concept of security of countries in the Asia-Pacific region was different from that of the countries

in Europe. He said the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) model of confidence- and security-building measures was hardly applicable to the Asian-Pacific region, where local wars were relatively frequent.

Yesterday morning, speakers expressed the view that the adoption of confidence- and security-building measures in Europe could help promote a lasting peace in the Middle East following the Gulf war. Heinrich Gleissner, Deputy Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Austria, said plans to create a stability framework for the Middle East and the Mediterranean by using CSCE as a model were of immediate interest. Social and economic problems of the region should also be tackled with the help of Western industrial countries.

Also addressing the Seminar, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Yasushi Akashi, stressed that the perspective for the Middle East should be neither strictly European nor wholly global, but somewhere in between -- an "interregional" dialogue.

Organized by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs in co-operation with the Austrian Government, the three-day seminar is being attended by about 60 high-level experts from all regions of the world.

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed the United Nations today that it was sending additional staff to Saudi Arabia to deal with the increasing numbers of prisoners of war.

The ICRC said it was conducting visits to ensure the safety of captured Iraqi soldiers in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war.

The ICRC further said it had still not received any information from Iraq on prisoners of war it had taken since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, and in the military operations under way since 17 January. The Committee appealed to the Iraqi authorities to take immediate action to remedy what it termed a "serious situation, which constituted grave lack of respect of the Third Geneva Convention".

* * *

The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, appealed today to the international community for additional contributions to emergency relief to Afghanistan. He was making the appeal in his preface to the "Operation Salam" Programme for 1990, just released by the United Nations office co-ordinating humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan.

For 1991, Mr. Sevan reported, $232.4 million was needed As of 6 February, some $118 million of that had been funded, leaving a shortfall of about $115 million for the implementation of programmes and projects this

year. Priority had been given to projects in agriculture, food aid, mine clearance, voluntary repatriation and health.

In meeting the budget gap, he said, the international community would be asked to make additional contributions to priority sectors and to fulfil previous pledges amounting to $32.4 million.

* *** *